

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A valuables monitoring system comprising:
  - a disturbance detection mechanism comprising one or more
  - 5 sensors configured to generate a disturbance signal upon
  - disturbance of an item being monitored;
  - an alarm connected to be triggered by the disturbance signal;
  - a receiver configured to receive a wireless signal from a
  - remote unit;
  - 10 an alarm inhibition mechanism connected to selectively
  - inhibit operation of the alarm, the alarm inhibition mechanism
  - including a mechanism responsive to signals from the remote unit
  - received at the receiver to automatically inhibit the alarm if the
  - received signals indicate that the remote unit is nearby.
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2. A valuables monitoring system according to claim 1 wherein the
- disturbance detection mechanism, alarm, receiver and alarm
- inhibition mechanism are packaged in a base unit and the system
- comprises a lock for attaching the base unit to the item being
- 20 monitored.
3. A valuables monitoring system according to claim 2 comprising a
- connector for attaching the base unit to a security slot of the item.
- 25 4. A valuables monitoring system according to claim 2 wherein the
- item comprises a computer and the base unit comprises an

interface for coupling the base unit to a PC card interface of the computer.

5. A valuables monitoring system according to claim 2 wherein the  
5 item comprises a computer and the base unit comprises an interface for coupling the base unit to a universal serial bus port of the computer.
6. A valuables monitoring system according to claim 1 wherein the  
10 disturbance detection mechanism, alarm, receiver and alarm inhibition mechanism are integrated within the item being monitored.
7. A valuables monitoring system according to claim 1 comprising a  
15 timer connected to delay the application of the disturbance signal to the alarm by a delay period.
8. A valuables monitoring system according to claim 7 wherein the  
20 base unit is configured to detect DISABLE signals originating at the remote unit and to disable the alarm upon receipt of a DISABLE signal.
9. A valuables monitoring system according to claim 1 wherein the  
25 base unit comprises a transmitter and is configured to transmit a notification signal upon occurrence of the disturbance signal.

10. A valuables monitoring system according to claim 4 wherein the base unit is configured to detect OFF signals originating at the remote unit and to turn itself off upon receipt of an OFF signal.
- 5 11. A valuables monitoring system according to claim 1 wherein the receiver comprises a radiofrequency receiver.
12. A valuables monitoring system according to claim 1 comprising a mechanism for comparing a strength of the wireless signal to a  
10 threshold, wherein the alarm inhibition mechanism is configured to inhibit the alarm while the strength of the wireless signal exceeds the threshold.
13. A valuables monitoring system according to claim 1 comprising a  
15 transmitter and a mechanism responsive to the receiver for causing the transmitter to send periodic REMINDER signals if received signals do not indicate that the remote unit is nearby.
14. A valuables monitoring system according to claim 1 wherein the  
20 alarm inhibition mechanism comprises a microcontroller interfaced to the disturbance detection mechanism, alarm and receiver.
15. A valuables monitoring system according to claim 2, wherein the base unit lacks an external control for turning off the base unit.  
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16. A valuables monitoring system according to claim 2 wherein the wireless signal is encoded in a manner associated with the remote

unit and the base unit includes a decoder configured to decode and pass wireless signals encoded in the manner associated with the remote unit.

- 5    17.    A method for monitoring an item, the method comprising:  
         providing a base unit attached to the item and a remote unit;  
         detecting a proximity of the remote unit to the base unit and  
         inhibiting an alarm if the remote unit is determined to be nearby  
         the base unit;  
10           detecting a disturbance of the base unit and, in response to  
         the disturbance triggering the alarm unless the alarm is inhibited.
18.    A method according to claim 17 comprising waiting for an interval  
         after detecting the disturbance before triggering the alarm.
- 15    19.    A method according to claim 18 comprising sending a notification  
         signal from the base unit to the remote unit upon detecting the  
         disturbance.
- 20    20.    A method according to claim 19 comprising, at the remote unit,  
         receiving the notification signal and performing a notification  
         action detectable by a person carrying the remote unit in response  
         to the notification signal.
- 25    21.    A method according to claim 20 comprising, at the remote unit,  
         receiving a control input and, in response to the control input

transmitting a DISABLE signal, and, at the base unit, receiving the  
DISABLE signal and deactivating the alarm in response thereto.

22. A method according to claim 17 comprising periodically  
5 transmitting a REMINDER signal from the base unit if the remote  
unit is determined to be not nearby to the base unit.
23. A method according to claim 22 comprising, at the remote unit,  
receiving the REMINDER signal and performing a reminder  
10 action detectable by a person carrying the remote unit in response  
to the REMINDER signal.
24. A method according to claim 17 wherein detecting the proximity  
of the remote unit comprises measuring at the base unit a strength  
15 of a ranging signal transmitted by the remote unit.
25. A method according to claim 24 comprising adjusting a strength of  
the ranging signal to vary a size of a region within which the  
remote unit is determined to be nearby to the base unit.  
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26. A method according to claim 17 wherein detecting the proximity  
of the remote unit comprises detecting at the base unit a ranging  
signal transmitted by the remote unit.
- 25 27. A method according to claim 26 comprising transmitting the  
ranging signal automatically upon receipt at the remote unit of a  
request signal from the base unit.

28. A method according to claim 26 wherein the request signal has a range greater than a range of the ranging signal.
29. A method according to claim 26 comprising adjusting a strength of the ranging signal to vary a size of a region within which the remote unit is determined to be nearby to the base unit.
30. A method according to claim 17 wherein detecting the proximity of the remote unit comprises transmitting a ranging signal from the base unit and, in response to detection of the ranging signal at the remote unit, automatically transmitting a reply signal.
31. A method according to claim 17 wherein detecting the proximity of the base unit to the remote unit comprises exchanging one or more radio frequency signals between the base unit and the remote unit and the method comprises varying a frequency of the radio frequency signals according to a frequency-hopping algorithm.